Published in New Directions in Indian Psychology (vol. 1: Social Psychology). In A. K. Dalal & G. Misra ((Eds.). New Delhi: Sage

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA: EVOLUTION AND EMERGING TRENDS

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Social psychology is as old as homosapiens on this earth. Throughout the recorded history, social nature of man has intrigued scholars, artists, and social reformers. Their work has significant bearing on understanding how people relate with others and conduct their social life. Scriptures, artefacts, music, poetry, all have contributed to this endeavour. What has intrigued scholars is the evidence of both, universality and uniqueness of social behaviour in different cultures. People have lived together in all cultures as family, community and nation, though they may not have learned to live together in peace. Human nature has essentially remained the same eversince. It seems that many of the questions which ancient social psychology raised are the same which contemporary social psychology is striving to answer. However, rapid social, economic, and political changes sweeping across the oceans and continents have thrown up many new questions for social psychologists. Many new theories and methods are being developed to unravel general principles of social interaction.

It is therefore, not surprising that the quests and concerns in discourses of Plato and Aristotle were similar to those of the ancient Indian thinkers, like Manu, Gautam, Yagyavalkya and Kautilya. They were all concerned with the sustenance of social institutions to uphold the social code of conduct, while preserving human freedom. It was always considered important that people get socialized to conform to social authority and internalize family values and traditions. At the same time all societies have experimented with various systems to strike a match between social norms and individual aspirations. Social conflicts, violence, exploitations throughout the ages had kept social thinkers busy to examine geneses and expound solutions. Social psychology has evolved as a discipline to grapple with the issues of understanding social interactional process. The endeavour is to find ways to maintain ideal social conditions in which people can live together in peace and harmony.

However, apart from this common quest to understand and transform human behaviour, there are differences in the world-views; the ways in which the social reality is analyzed, explained and rendered meaningful in western and non-western cultures, like India. The difference is not just in terms of the methods of inquiry but more basic in terms of

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ontological reality of human existence. The comparison is further complicated by the fact that whereas Indian sages concentrated on the 'ideal' state, the Western scholars focused on observed reality of the interaction between man and society. The purpose of juxtaposing world-views of these different societies here is to examine the progress of western social psychology and its implications for understanding social issues and problems we are facing in India. A critical appraisal would enable us to view the knowledge base of social psychology with particular reference to Indian work.

In the following sections, attempts are made to understand the progress of social psychology in India as a Euro-American enterprise. Major historical developments which shaped the discipline in West were shown to have significant implications for the growth of social psychology in India. Finally, the major dilemmas and discontentments among Indian psychologists, and which form the core of the emerging discipline are discussed. The major thrust of this chapter is to drive home the contention that societal development and social psychological developments impinge on each other, and that one cannot be understood without juxtaposing the other.

What is Social in Social Psychology?

Every science has its substantive field, a core by which it is identified. The field of social psychology is usually defined as
that branch of science that deals with human interaction, i.e., the interaction between man and man, and man and society. It aims to search out general laws of social behaviour. Social psychologists are trained in using the tools of conceptual analysis and scientific methodology in the explaining relationship between person and society. Obviously there could be several social psychologies, depending on the meaning of the term 'social'.

Staat (1983) posited that the concept of social refers to both - social environment and social behaviour. Social environment, in a sense, extends the analogy of physical environment to social setting. It refers to social groups, organizations, structures, norms, obligations, support, etc., which provide the context within which an individual performs. Social behaviour refers to affects, attitudes, activities, and motivations in response to any social environment. The study of such social behaviour is mostly at the individual level; more precisely, the study of individual in a group. This emphasis on individual behaviour got accentuated with the rise of American influence on social psychology, particularly with popularity of the experimental approach. Graumann (1986) called it the individualization of 'social'; the reduction of social variables to the level of the individual. Another way of looking at individualization of the social is to treat society as individual and imputing individual level processes to the society. Thus, if psychology is defined as a science of behaviour (than that of mind), social psychology can be defined as a science of social behaviour. The same methodology which is used at the individual level is employed to study societies.

Apart from this generalized view of 'social', the meaning of the term has taken different shades for different schools of social psychology. The behaviouristic school emphasizes those aspects of 'social' which are directly observable, which fits in a complex stimulus-

response system. In a simplistic sense, the indices of social imply whether others are present when the behaviour of the individual being studied takes place, and how many others are present. The work of Allport on social facilitation (1920) and that of Latane and Darle on bystander's effect (1968) are the examples of defining social in terms of nature and number of others whose presence brought change in the behaviour. The social so defined refers to interindividual interactional subsystems of society (its norms, values, etc.). The cognitive psychologists consider individual as an information processing system, and as such view social as cognitive representation of the society in which people live. Its focus is on social cognition, i.e., perceptions of social events and their interpretations. The approach lays emphasis on cognitive constructions which are held as significant predictors of social behaviour, rather than the actual 'social world' in which people live. The cultural psychologists define social as a psychic representation in people of their society's cultural and social institutions. This view is divergent with the previously held view of social as a-historical and a-cultural and considers social behaviour as rooted in the history of society.

To maintain an identity distinct from American social psychology, European social psychologists have rooted their discipline in the work of European philosophers. For example, French social psychologist Moscovici based his interpretation of social influences in the concept of collective representation as propounded by Durkheim. For them, culture and society became the defining characteristics as far as social psychology was concerned. European social psychology thus followed a different course, other than its American counterpart. Interestingly, in India, sociologically trained social psychologists followed the European model, whereas psychologically oriented social psychologists more or less adopted the American model.

The Indian Heritage

The rich Indian tradition of analyzing and interpreting social relationships goes back to more than 1500 B.C., and much can be traced in the Vedic and post-Vedic literature. This treasurehouse is a rich source of discovering concepts and theories which guided social life without discontinuity uptill the present times. One thing which is common to all these scholarly pursuits was that no distinction was made between psychology, philosophy and religion in analyzing social behaviour which encompassed the totality of human existence. It dealt with all life domains and all stages of human development.

At the core is the concept of *dharma.* First mentioned in the *Rigveda* and later elaborated in Gautam's *Dharmashastra* (about 600 B.C.), *Dharma* is vaguely translated in English as 'proper action', 'moral duty', 'law of human nature'. Shared by most Indians and enduring with remarkable continuity, *Dharma* has greatly influenced ways of thinking, perceiving and categorising experiences. As Kakar (1979) stated, "In its social implication, dharma is an inherent force in human being which holds the individual and society together, or going one step further, the force which makes 'individual and society hold each other together'."(p.6) The *Dharma* of a person is believed to be contingent on four factors : (a)*desh* (country, region), (b) *Kala* (period of history), (c) *shrama* (work, occupation), and (d) *guna* (bio-mental attributes). The concept of *Dharma* is part of the broader Hindu theory of life cycle

and developmental stages (*Ashrama dharma*). It is both a process and mechanism of social integration to maintain harmonious relationship within the society. Most social institutions seek their legitimacy in *Dharma* rather than in contractual agreements and obligations, as in the West. Transgression of *Dharma* is presumed to be the root cause of all social unrest and conflicts. In many ways, the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* provide a complete treatise on a symbiotic relationship between man, society and supernatural. These are the best sources to examine Hindu social life through the ages.

Another important aspect of Indian tradition is the indivisibility of cosmic and material self, of person and nature, and of person and society. In this scheme of thoughts, self is considered to be integral to the all-pervasive cosmic reality. Man, animal, plant all are believed to share the same cosmic energy, and are bound by the same cosmic principles. There is one universal law according to which all living and non-living things function in harmony and natural rhythum. "The individual function of the one blends with the individual function of the others, and result in collective immanent balance of a living combined organism" (Heimann, 1964, p.42). Establishing a perfect balance with nature and society is considered to be the ultimate goal of life. It is contended that only an organismic and holistic approach can capture the complexity of human existence and consequently, any effort to fragment it is resisted.

The Indian world view lays emphasis on interdependence and interrelatedness of man and society. As a social being, a person has no existence outside this network of relationships. Each one is related to the other in terms of innumerable relationships (based on caste, class, family, community, and even gods) which define one's existence and shape one's ego-identity. The interrelationship between man and society is presumed to be complex and hierarchical, transcending the boundaries of the material world. The ego-identity in this sense is considered to be a social construction, something which is contingent on one's life experiences and social background. Thus, one's social-self exists only in the mind of the person not in reality. Self-development lies in realizing this unreal existence and in performing ones's *dharma* without a sense of attachment. This view of *Dharma* provides 'ideal images' of life in Plato's sense and thus deals with prescriptive social behaviour.

The ancient and classical Indian social theories pervaded throughout the ages without being much influenced, either directly by the Muslims who ruled the country for six centuries, or indirectly by the West. In essence, Indian society remained Indian until the beginning of the colonial rule in India in the 18th Century. All along, the notion of *Dharma* rendered a sense of continuity to social institutions and traditions and remained a guiding principle in social life.

The exposure to the western civilization during colonial rule was a different experience for the Indian society. The contrast between these societies in terms of customs, norms, institutions and social life was glaring. The British brought in a different administrative structure, and in the process introduced industrialization, market capitalism, and primacy of science and technology. The Indian society responded to colonial dominance in characteristically different forms. Overawed by the perceived superiority of the western

culture, for a section of Indians, western society became the model of a modern society. For them Indian social values and practices were seen as impediments to growth and technological advancements. There was another section of urban elite who got educated in the western mould. They began to examine Indian society through western standards and were keen to root out its archaic and evil practices. Raja Rammohan Roy, Ravindra Nath Tagore, belonged to this class. These social reformers and thinkers were striving for the fusion of western and eastern cultures. More serious philosophers and scholars of the later period, prominent among them being Vivekanand, Arvind Ghosh, Anand Coomarswamy and Gokhale, engaged in the reinterpretation of Indian social philosophy and to make it relevant in the changing times. These scholars provided new interpretive approaches and perspectives, together with alternative blueprints of a futuristic the Indian society and people. By and large what these approaches shared was a certain blending of Indian and western life style and ideology (Dallmayr & Devy, 1998). A third section of the Indian society rejected the western model and reasserted the spiritual base of Indian social life. Tilak and Gandhi emphasized moral-spiritual renewal with commitment to socio-economic equity and harmony. Gandhi strived for a radical transformation of the Indian society, and that of the world where humanism and freedom are the overriding considerations. Though working outside the academic setting these thinkers initiated public debates and generated literature which is of great significance in understanding Indian society in colonial and post-colonial period.

Social Psychology in the West

In the West, it was the work of Plato and Aristotle which provided the basis for the study of social behaviour. Much as in the Indian tradition, statecraft and theories of state were all part of the inquiry about men's relationship with society. In fact, since Plato's *The Republic,* for almost two and half millennium social psychology was largely a branch of political philosophy (Allport, 1968). Plato's work represents a complete philosophy of human existence, the principles of social life and that of individual soul. Rational wisdom was the Greek ideal of man *par excellence.* Aristotle, though approved Platonic rationalism, was a realist and grounded his philosophy in observation and analysis. As mentioned by Paranjpe (1984), "The dominance of the analytic approach in the Greek mode of thought is reflected in Aristotle's invention of logic, and in the elevation in Greek thought of mathematics to an almost sacred status." (p.19). The Greek and Roman views and man and society were essentially secular, rooted in academic scepticism and materialism.

Later on, the Greek idea of reason did not go well with the idea of faith in Christianity. The concern for right and moral action countermanded logical analysis and abstraction. The Christianity with its strong faith in revelations and supremacy of man on earth had an overwhelming influence on social life in Europe in the era of enlightenment. Despite Thomas Acquinas's efforts in the middle age to synthesize the best of Aristotlean philosophy and Christian thoughts, the two streams ran parallel. The differences between rational and irrational elements in the two traditions were too strong to be reconciled. It was only in the seventeenth century when a serious conflict between the rational and irrational

erupted and the authority of the church to control the institutions of science was questioned. It was the rise of the Cartesian formulation of mind-body problem, and development of scientific methods which eventually led to the beginning of modern social psychology.

Emergence of a New Discipline

The beginning of modern social psychology has its genesis in the new age of reasoning which was sweeping Europe in the eighteenth Century. There was a gradual emergence of sciences from the theological stranglehold and assertion of empiricism as the basis of knowledge generation. Social psychology was the product of this new age in which the society was struggling to adapt to the consequences of the industrial revolution sweeping all across Europe.

Allport has given the credit for carving out a new science of social psychology to French philosopher August Comte. Allport (1954) stated, "If it were ever possible to designate a single deliberate "founder" of social psychology as a science, we should have to nominate Comte for this honour."(p.7). Ironically, Comte never used the term 'psychology' for his science, for psychology in those days was too rationalistic, too introspective and too subjective. He feared that by retaining the name he would retard the growth of a positive science. So he coined the term *la morale* - a true final science of the highest order, a science which is anchored both in biology and in the study of society and culture. Comte contended that *la morale* must follow the positivistic methodology of physical sciences and should base its generalizations on empirical data.

According to Comte, *la morale* will be dependent on sound biology and sound sociology. When *la morale* deals with individual's place in culture and society, it constitutes social psychology. In his book Positive Polity (1852), Comte dealt with the perennial question, 'How can the individual be at once cause and consequence of the society?" A question which cannot be understood in terms of gross generalizations of sociology (again a term coined by Comte). Man is something more than a cultural cumulate with which sociology deals. *La morale* should relate with both - to an abstract science of individuality and to the realm of morality and ethics. This has a clear possibility of establishing a scientific basis of human morality. Comte's interest, however, remained strong in his early discovery of sociology. He believed that the existence of a language, a culture, or a social system, is prior to, and in no way reducible to, the lives of individuals.

For Comte, positivism was a true pursuit of science aiming at bringing about a new order and social regeneration in the background of chaos created by rapid industrialization of the society. He contended that positivism alone can give the measures to avoid violent revolutions arising from 'misunderstanding' and reduce prevailing social upheavals to a moral movement in the march of mankind. Comte's blueprint for the new positivist society was a strange mixture of industrial capitalism and medieval European society. Indeed, Comte's was a classical case in whose pursuits the main function of social science became the *production of ideology* (Samelson, 1974).

Despite Comte's assertion and high hopes, *la morale* did not grow as rapidly as he expected. Caught between two streams of biology and sociology, social psychology was struggling to establish its identity. The seminal work of Jeremy Bentham (hedonism), John Stuart Mill ( ), Herbert Spencer ( ) and others did prepare the ground for the real emergence of social psychology. In fact, the advent of scientific social psychology can be heralded with the publications of two textbooks with this title in 1908 - one by Ross and another by McDougall.

Though contemporary, these two books differed markedly in their orientation and content. Ross, being a sociologist, focused on social phenomena as a consequence of social interaction. McDougall, who was a psychologist by training, was more concerned about beliefs, volition and action which are due to the interaction within human being. The ambiguity in Comte's proposition of *la morale* was evident in the emphasis of these two books ; the first one being sociological in orientation and the later one closer to biological approach. Whereas the Ross's book did not have much impact and was not found relevant, McDougall's book was a monumental success and went into 30 editions. McDougall proposed a central role of instinct in regulating human social interaction. However, his theory did not find favour with the larger community of social psychologists. The criticism was so severe that eventually McDougall had to retreat from his early position. His theory did not conform to the contemporary ethos of objectivity, experimentation and functionalism.

Major Landmarks in Post-War Period

During the Second World War, social psychologists were called upon to take up research in the areas of group morale, persuasive communication and prejudices. The War underscored the relevance of social psychological research, and with support from government and masses, 1950s and 1960s were the boomtime for social psychology (Johnson & Nichols, 1998). In this period social psychologists were much under the influence of the gestalt school. The work of Muzaffer Sherif, Kurt Lewin and Solomon Asch brought into focus the gestalt perspective in social psychology. For them, groups were more than aggregation of individuals. They have properties which are emergent. Thus groups became real social entities and group dynamics became an area of practical significance. The gestalt social psychologists were experimental in approach but looked at reality from a different vantage point. Lewin founded a strong school of group dynamics. Festinger in 1950's proposed theories of social comparison and dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Asch's work on conformity and Milgram's work on obedience became classics.

The study of attitude and attitude change become central to the academic world of social psychologists in the post-war period. The work of the Hovland group at the Yale University became prominent. By the mid-1960's it was increasingly noticed that attitude does not predict behaviour. This led to a decline in the interest in attitude research. Subsequent work in this area has endeavoured to develop models for making attitude-behaviour relation stronger, to understand the effect of attitude on information processing, persuasion and attitudinal advocacy. On the whole, the progress in these areas has been

uneven (see Eagly, 1992 for an assessment).

In 1960's, experimental social psychology was criticized for insufficient attention to the context. The European Social Psychology, however, during late 1960's started responding to the important aspects of social structure in new ways. This change was led by Henri Tajfel in England and Serge Moscovici in France. Tajfel brought the cognitive tradition to the study of intergroup relations and social identity. His seminal study of the process of categorization has changed our perspective on group processes. He replaced cohesiveness by belonging. Moscovici focussed on the problem of minority influence. He wanted to explain innovation and social change achieved by the minorities. However, his main work dealt with the study of social representation.

The emergence of attribution theory during 1960's was another major event in social psychology. The early initiative was taken by Heider (1958) in the Psychology of Interpersonal Relations. Later development by Jones and Davis (1965) Kelley (1967), and Weiner (1972) made attribution a central concern in 1970's.

The Crisis of Confidence

The crisis in the field of social psychology during 1960s and 1970s raised many fundamental and profound issues about the nature of knowledge being generated and its relevance to contemporary social changes. It was a 'crisis of confidence' in the linear growth of social psychological research. The factors which contributed to this crisis can be put into three clusters : ethical research procedures, methodological weaknesses and ideological biases.

The crisis of confidence and demand for relevance experienced in the field of social psychology, particularly during 1960s and 1970s eventually led to the development of alternative social psychologies, as distinct from traditional social psychology.

The traditional social psychology, particularly of American type, essentially resorted to a mechanistic model of man requiring that behaviour be explicated in terms of external stimuli, with internal sources of behaviour to be minimized, and requiring a one-to-one relationship between particular causes and particular effects. The persistent criticism of social psychology on several grounds raised doubts and debates about its very scientific status it so concertedly cherished to acquire.

The criticisms of research procedures and their injurious effects on the mental state of the research subject became a serious issue in early 1970s. Zimbardo's (1972) study of prison simulation and Milgram's (1974) study on obedience to authority raised many ethical issues about experimental manipulation of human subjects. New ethical standards were enforced which restricted the freedom of the researcher to put the subject in 'stressful situation'. Serious doubts were also raised about the research methodology itself. The important contribution of Orne (1962) on social psychology of the (subjects in) social-psychological experiments, made researchers aware of the influence of demand characteristics in laboratory work. Rosenthal (1966) provided empirical evidence of experimenters' bias affecting the research outcomes. The work of Orne and Rosenthal challenged the validity

of the entire experimental social psychology research.

The traditional social psychology research was also much criticized for its ideological bias (Billig, 1982). The Anglo-American culture values individualism, competition, material achievement, independence, scienticism, etc. which get reflected in their research issues, methodology and interpretation of results. These value biases posed serious questions about neutrality and objectivity in human research. A final blow to traditional social psychology was the forceful argument that research endeavour should be interpreted as a historical enterprise, since it describes social behaviour only of a particular period (Gergen, 1973). Cross-cultural psychology substantiated the argument that the current body of knowledge can in no way be generalized for societies at different stages of industrial development.

The Two Social Psychologies

Hundred years back Durkheim (1898/1965) published an article "Individual and Collective Representations" which divided social psychology into two separate disciplines. His primary objective in writing this article was to distinguish between sociologically oriented social psychology (study of collective representations) from psychologically oriented social psychology (individual representations). Durkheim asserted that the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of individual consciousness. His sharp distinction between the two disciplines led to the development of social psychology within the boundaries of either discipline. The gap widened further with the assertion of Allport (1924) in his book on social psychology that other persons and social situations are stimuli no different in principle from other (non-social) stimuli - a view that effectively denied the defining principles of social psychology as conceived by most sociologists. Taking a contrasting position to that of Durkheim, Allport wrote, "There is no psychology of group which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals" (1924, p.vi). Belonging to the behaviouristic tradition of Watson and Skinner, Allport had a vision of social psychology as a truly scientific discipline. His views and work in the areas of attitude and personality within the general frame of individual psychology culminated in the development of a distinct American social psychology.

The psychological social psychology was more concerned to build its identity as a science by increasingly resorting to experimental methodology, whereas sociological social psychology was more concerned with direct observation of real life situation. The use of experimental methodology enhanced the status of social psychology as a hard science. The psychologists looked down upon the sister discipline as a soft science. The sociological social psychologists, in turn, considered social psychology produced by psychologists as irrelevant to human condition and symbolic nature of their interaction with the world. They were critical of psychological social psychology for studying individual's responses as individuals, not as part of some collective. Today, there are two distinct social psychologies, each with its own perspectives, disciplinary base, differing academic heritage, methodology and orientations. Confined to different academic departments there are limited points of contacts between the two disciplines.

Furthermore, in terms of heritage and emphasis, psychological social psychology has taken recourse to two distinguishable streams. The European social psychology has in many ways taken a different turn than the American social psychology. Rooted in the long history and cultural heritage, the European social psychology tended to be embedded more in the contemporary social institutions. The emphasis is more on an organic relationship between man and society. The European social psychology remained more humanistic in its orientation. The forerunners of European social psychology were eminent sociologists and philosophers, like Manneheim, Marxs, Durkheim who saw a much larger role for social institutions than envisaged by the American social psychology. As such, the work of Tajfel and Moscovici, for example, studied social behaviour of a person from the societal standpoint. The American social psychology, on the other hand, had to struggle to be accepted as a scientific pursuit in early years when European writings crossed the Atlantic. The growth was slow in the beginning, as it did not find favour with the general ethos of psychology as a 'study of individual behaviour'. It started to develop a distinct identity with the studies of Kurt Lewin on group dynamics and that on attitudes by the Chicago school. Only individuals can have attitudes. The differentiation further accentuated with the American social psychology going experimental and employing methodological rigour. The large scale experimental work by Festinger, Milgram, Zimbardo, etc. who succeeded in simulating real life situations in the social psychology laboratories made psychological social psychology immensely popular in 1960s and 1970s.

The ascendence of American social psychology in the post-Second World War period completed the breach between two social psychologies. Despite significant contributions made by European social psychology, social psychology largely remained an American product. Its intellectual concerns were greatly influenced by the political ideology of the American society and by the social problems confronting United States. These problems affected the topics chosen for investigation, further reinforced by the governmental funding available in the selective areas. Obviously, the body of knowledge generated would have been substantially different in a different social setting.

In any case, the two social psychologies maintained their distinct identities for a very long time and there was very little communication and contact between them. Not only that they did not learn and benefit much from each other, their subject matter also remained different. This situation, however, is changing in recent years with many internal and external forces pulling them together. Some of the factors which are responsible for the reapproachment are mentioned here.

One, was the demand for social psychology to become more relevant by taking up the problems of contemporary society. It was realized that by consciously guarding the boundaries of their respective disciplines they, in actuality, were failing to grapple with the real social problems. The emerging applied social psychology was required to broaden the scope of its inquiry by taking both the societal and individual level variables into account. Two, there was an increasing realization that the existing models and theories in both the disciplines are inadequate to explain the complex social reality. Confining to either individual level or societal level variables only limits the possibilities of a complete analysis.

Both the disciplines have to learn from each other and benefit from the advances made in both the disciplines to arrive at a holistic understanding. Three, the critics of social psychology of both kinds started viewing social psychology as an ideology. For Manneheim (1936), an ideology is a system of ideas defining or protecting the social status-quo. For example, individualism in the American social psychology is an ideology which is implicit in most of the conceptual and theoretical developments. The ideology is seen as a domain of sociologically oriented social psychology and becomes a meeting ground for the two disciplines. Four, social life in recent formulations is seen more often as a process than a content field. To understand the social process, it is imperative to go beyond classifications and descriptions, to engage in higher order abstractions .

Lastly, the crisis of confidence in both social psychologies led to increasing questioning of their basic assumptions, methodology and usefulness brought home the realization that cross-fertilization is probably a better way of surviving the crises of identity.

Alternative Social Psychologies

These controversies and crises disillusioned many psychologists within the traditional social psychology. They actively looked for a paradigm change : alternative constructions of social problems and research methodology to render social psychology more in tune with the changing world. In last 2-3 decades social psychology has branched into many clearly identifiable systems of knowledge. These alternative, and at times complementary, psychologies have agreed upon subject matter, have common methodology and are represented by some seminal work or a group of psychologists. Most of these alternative social psychologies are either recent innovations, or extensions of certain established fields of study. In any case, they are still evolving and expanding their horizon, mostly with interdisciplinary approach and analytic methodology. Though traditional social psychology still constitutes the core and is followed in most academic departments, alternative social psychologies are acknowledged as newly emerging fields with much excitement and apprehension.

Moghaddam and Harre (1995) have identified six clearly distinguishable, but sometimes overlapping alternative social psychologies. These are briefly discussed here.

Discursive Psychology : It primarily deals with the analysis of discussion, conversation and arguments in any social (group) situation. It is presumed in this case that much of the social behaviour is an outcome of such conversion as verbal interaction, rather than of each person's cognitive activity. Some of the psychological phenomena only exist in such conversational processes and are said to be discursively constructed.

Ethogenics : It refers to the structural analysis of social episodes. Such episodes are revealing of the significant role of existing social, as well as, of structures which are created in the course of people acting in accordance with social norms. For example, the ethogenic study of social violence may bring out the salience of cultural expectations and values.

Narrative Psychology : This branch deals with the study of life narratives of people caught

in different social circumstances. Such life episodes unfold the social side of human existence. The construction of life events may reveal man's relationship with society, supernatural and his environment, and the larger network which impinges on one's social-view. The main working hypothesis of narrative psychology is that the norms according to which people construct both the episodes of daily living, and the stories which they tell about their lives are drawn from the same source, namely the narrative conventions available in that society.

Symbolic Interactionism : The main thesis of this alternative social psychology is that human interaction is mediated not by causal processes but by the use of symbols which differ in their meaning in different social situations. Their meaning is socially constructed. It also recognizes that individual and society exist in an interdependent mode.

Ethnomethodology : The basic assumption of ethnomethodology is that the methods by which skilled actors produce their thoughts, and social and practical actions are not explicitly known. For example, one who has learned to fly a kite is not necessarily able to give a discursive account of the way to carry out that skilled performance. The aim of ethnomethodology is to make explicit the implicit method by which human life is constructed, moment by moment, in a particular cultural set up. Garfinkle's (1967) pioneering work on the implicit methods by which an impression of womanhood is constructed and sustained provides impetus to this field.

Cultural Psychology : Though the term of cultural psychology is not new, in recent times this term is often used to distinguish it from cross-cultural psychology. The research in cultural psychology aims to unravel the local traditions and practices of highly diverse societies, from which both cultural-specifics (emics) and universals (etics) emerge. Cultural psychology premises that psychological phenomena are properties of discourse and not the attributes of either overt behaviour or social cognitions. It is eclectic in its methodology and tries to unravel the reciprocal relationship between culture and psychological phenomena.

Activity Psychology : Activity psychology was the creation of Russian psychologist Leontiev whose basic thesis was that human beings are the active source of their own behaviour. Every human being should be treated as if engaged in goal-oriented intentional action (in thoughts also), even though it may not appear to the actor as such. The psychological analysis of behaviour should then take into consideration the means/end pattern. The task of a psychologist is then to reveal these mean/end patterns, as they operate in diverse human activities, from bicycling to playing flute. To understand people as social beings, the focus should be on the states in which smooth performance breaks down.

All these alternative social psychologies have much in common in terms of concerns and methods. People in all of them are viewed as active and intentional agents in joint accomplishments of social goals rather than bound by any mechanistic principle. The focus is on the episodes of everyday life, as patterns of meaningful actions. Again, the methods of research are radically different from those of traditional social psychology, as the

emphasis here is to capture the complex processes of human actions as they unfold from moment to moment. A controversy is, however, waged about the scientificity of these methods. The issue at present is subsumed by the larger debate about 'what does it mean to be scientific?'

Despite all the promises which alternative social psychologies hold, its impact on traditional social psychology is minimal, which still constitute the mainstream social psychology. The central place of laboratory in social psychology has remained unchanged, as 80% of the research is still experimental, with heavy reliance on college students (Sears, 1986; Aronson, Ellsworth, Carlsmith, & Gonzales, 1990). Indeed, the tendency of taking subjects from white-middle class undergraduate students has increased over the years, as inclusion of black subjects in research went down from 3.1% in early seventies to 0.3% in late eighties (Graham, 1992). Taking subjects only from the age group of 18-25 years imply that traditional social psychology has not much to contribute to the understanding of societal development and issues related to rapid social and global changes. The relevance of this social psychology for developing countries is very questionable.

The same bias is reflected in the publications and citations of major research journals in social psychology. It has primarily remained a north American endeavour. For example, Gielen (1994) has shown that over a period of five decades (1950-90), more than 99% of all editors and editorial board members of journals published from America and distributed world over, belonged to the same region. Similarly, over 95% of the authors are from North America and 5-8% references included in these journals are from the rest of the world. This is in contrast to natural sciences and mathematics where about 44% of all citations given by U.S. authors are from outside (cited in Rosenzweig, 1984). Clearly, social psychologists from North America have not paid any attention to the academic work done outside. It is, indeed, unfortunate that this traditional social psychology continues to form the main body of knowledge in developing countries.

Social Psychology in India

What constitutes traditional social psychology in West can be rechristened as modern social psychology in India. As mentioned earlier, the traditional (or call it ancient) social psychology is largely a derivative of the scriptures of Dharmashastra, Arthashastra, Mahabharat, Puranas, etc. The concepts and principles of social psychology inherent in these texts not only mirrored the Indian society but also proscribed models of social behaviour uptill the beginning of the twentieth Century.

Historically speaking, sociology and social anthropology have much longer history in India than social psychology. For Britishers, India was a very different society, a mystical world of sadhus, snake charmers and supernatural. "The unique systems of caste, religion, tribal and rural communities, rituals, beliefs and traditions were baffling to an Englishman. It had no parallel in the experiences of western societies" (Dalal, 1996, p.210). Making mistakes

in dealing with people without knowing their social background quite often landed them in trouble. The mutiny of 1857 was very much attributed to this ignorance on the part of the Britishers who failed to fathom the consequences of violating cultural norms. For the smooth functioning of the colonial administration, it was imperative for them to learn about Indian customs and traditions. The Britishers supported sociological and anthropological studies and by the turn of this century these disciplines were well established in the Indian academics (Dhanangre, 1985). Social psychological research did not have that advantage and was largely ignored by the colonial rulers.

What we know today as social psychology had a beginning in the establishment of the first psychology department at the Calcutta University. N.N. Sengupta, the first chairman of the Department, had his degree with Hugo Munsternberg (a student of William Wundt) at Harvard University. Though his basic training was in experimental psychology, he was deeply interested in the study of Indian society. When N.N. Sengupta moved to Lucknow University, he worked with an eminent sociologist Radhakamal Mukherjee to produce a book on social psychology in 1928. The book was published from London and coming soon after Allport's book (1924), it was widely noticed by the academic community.

This fine precedence of scholars from sociology and psychology working together was, however, not followed in most of the later work in social psychology in India. Rather, it proved to be an exception to the rule. In the formative years, and even later, there was rarely any systematic academic exchange between sociology and psychology. As a consequence, social psychology could never become a bridge between the two sister disciplines. Social psychology within the sociological tradition was well established in India with its methods of survey and participant observation, focused on Indian social institutions and their relation with social role-specific behaviour. Their analysis of primary and secondary data was very much in the tradition of Marx, Durkheim, Manneheim and other European sociologists. Social psychologists from the psychology background worked primarily in the American tradition with emphasis on methodological sophistication. In only few cases (e.g., P.N. Prabhu's book: 'Hindu Social Organization', 1954) psychologists dealt with Indian customs, traditions and social institutions. The distance between the two disciplines widened further with Indian psychologists making all out efforts to establish the identity of psychology as a scientific discipline. They were much inspired by the work done in the West.

To give an example, Bartlett (1932) developed the technique of serial reproduction to study reconstructive memory of events, as it is transmitted from one person to another in daily life. Jamuna Prasad used this technique to study the famous earthquake in Bihar in 1934. He collected and analyzed more than 35 thousand rumours and published this work in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1935. This, and the later work of Durganand Sinha (1952) on similar lines, was reported by Festinger as the basis of formulating his theory of cognitive dissonance.

Reviewing the work of his time, Girindrashekhar Bose (1938) lamented that it was mostly replication of the Western work. He was optimistic that "... time was not distant when it will

be able to open new paths for itself. The field is exceedingly rich and good harvest awaits the earnest and intelligent workers. Much fruitful work may be done in folk and social psychology" (Bose, 1938, p.345). Barring few experimental studies, most of the social psychological studies of his time were logical analyses of various social phenomena. Social psychology before Independence was less popular than general psychology and clinical psychology (Ganguli, 1971).

After India's Independence, Prime Minister Nehru was much keen to catch up with the West in terms of economic development. He considered adoption of Western science and technology as panacea for rapid socio-economic growth of the country. As a result, wholesale import of Western science started, from which psychology in India did not remain unaffected. Many academic exchange programmes were started (Commonwealth, Fulbright, etc.), under which a large number of Indian scholars went abroad for higher studies and many distinguished western scholars came to India. As a case in point, much disturbed by the large scale communal violence during India's partition, Nehru sought the help of UNESCO to conduct large scale studies on communalism and social violence. Gardner Murphy under UNESCO plan came to India and many Indian psychologists worked with him to understand social-psychological consequences of communal hatred. These research are summarized in Murphy's book (1954), "In the Minds of Men".

In the later years, Indian social psychologists continued working in the areas of prejudice, stereotypes and social attitudes. Large scale surveys were conducted taking various attitude measures. Adinarayan conducted studies on racial and communal attitudes (1953) and on caste attitudes (1958). This line of research was followed by Rath and Sircar (1960), Anant (1970), and others. With increasing emphasis on public awareness programmes for health, family planning, agricultural innovations, attitude change became a major topic of research. The Western experience showed that there is a close link between attitude change and desired social change for development. Knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) studies became very popular, so much so that more than 240 such studies were conducted by late sixties (Sinha, 1986).

That social psychology was growing in popularity in India was evident from surveys conducted from time to time. Ganguli (1971) found that in the period 1920-1967, social psychology ranked first with 16% of all the publications. As Rath (1972) noted, one fifth of all publications till the first two decades of Independence were in the area of social psychology, three-fourth of which were from the post-Independence period. During that period there was hardly any experimental work. Sinha (1986) reported that publications in social psychology increased from 19.2% in 1951-1955 to 29.97% in 1972-75. This quantum of publication in terms of percentage, however, did not increase in the following decades. What was clearly noticeable in the later years was an upsurge in experimental work in social psychology.

The initial studies in group psychology tried to establish a causal relationship between the presence of group and individual performance along the lines of Allport's work. This area became popular in later years with emphasis on examining group processes. The work was

done in the areas of intergroup relations (Singh, 1981), relative deprivation (see Misra, 1982), ingratiation (Pandey, 1986) and leadership (J.B.P. Sinha, 1980) in which influence of social groups on individual behaviour was investigated. More recently, the interest is shifting to study ethnic identities, the rise of depressed classes and related topics. In much of this research, efforts are being made to establish causal linkages between macro-level variables (demographic, social or cultural) and micro-level variables (attitudes, feeling of deprivation, etc.). The approach and methodology remained consistent with individual social psychology of the American variety.

Another area which persisted in popularity for long was achievement motivation. A large number of scales were constructed to measure achievement motivation of school and college students. In early sixties, McClelland's (1961) n-Ach theory attracted a large number of Indian psychologists. Some of them were convinced by his argument that an important cause of India's underdevelopment is low achievement of its people. An institution -Small Scale Industrial Training Institute was set up in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, where many Indian psychologists collaborated with him to provide entrepreneurial training on the lines of McClelland's theory. J.B.P. Sinha (1968) questioned the usefulness of n-Ach theory in Indian socio-cultural and economic context. He found that under scarce resource condition, high n-Ach poses an obstacle in helping each other. The later experimental work of J.B.P. Sinha and J.Pandey (1970) showed that in two high n-Ach groups, one who were selfish type tended to hoard resources more than the altruistic type. This posed a question mark on the relevance of McClelland's theory in the Indian context. The work in the area of achievement motivation took a different turn in 1980s with much interest in understanding the meaning of achievement in Indian culture. The work of Agrawal and Misra (1986), examining achievement goals and means of college students is an example of this trend.

By the end of seventies, there was a growing disillusionment in social psychology in India with the applicability of western theories. There was mounting evidence that social-psychological theories developed in the Western hemisphere do not provide solutions to our complex problems of social change and development. Sinha (1977) urged that the scientific understanding of Indian social reality should benefit from the vast treasurehouse of traditional psychological knowledge accumulated over centuries. He called for the development of an indigenous psychology with its own paradigm. Some of the Indian work which resulted from such repeated calls for indigenization, or otherwise are included in this volume.

Whereas, in the First ICSSR Survey of Research in Psychology (Mitra, 1970) there was only one chapter on social psychology. In the Third Survey (J. Pandey, 1988), one of the three volumes (with six chapters) was exclusively on social psychological issues, covering the research of the period 1977 to 1986. The research reported shows the increased research interest and popularity of this discipline in India. J.B.P. Sinha (1993) reported that clinical, social, personality and organizational areas accounted for 70% of all publications. Dalal and Sharma (1990) examined the growth pattern of social psychological research for the period 1972-86 by content analyzing the abstracts included in the *Indian Psychological Abstracts.* It was found that consistently over the years, only 13-14% of the publications employed experimental method. It was further observed that only in 41% of the

publications, student samples(both college and school) were used in research. Rest of the studies were conducted on general population, including intact groups. Clearly, Indian studies did not as heavily rely on experimental method and on college sophomores, as western studies had.

Crisis of Identity

The progress in social psychological research in India does not indicate any distinct mark in terms of context, method or ideological commitment. Until recently, two tendencies have been dominant. The first was to understand aspects of Indian social reality through western concepts and measures. This led to the study of prejudice, attitudes, stereotypes, values etc. The second tendency which was stronger, dealt with replicating the western studies and examining the consistency of conceptual linkages or testing the predictions in a different cultural setting. Extensions of western social psychological work were very crude. They followed a set pattern: "Researcher A has done this work. Therefore, I am doing this study. My results are in line with the work of researcher A". This kind of work has contributed to the maintenance of status quo.

Researches emanating from a genuine need, intellectual or social, from Indian soil were very limited. The work of Ashish Nandy on self, science, nationality, and Sudhir Kakar's work on identity and relationships are exceptions. They are interpretive and discursive. They utilize diverse kinds of resources including historical accounts, myths, narratives, interviews, everyday experiences, and whatever is relevant for pursuing the arguments. These, however, have yet not secured a place in the curricula of the mainstream social psychology taught in the Indian universities.

Finally, there is a growing concern in a small minority of scholars which is struggling to revive and reconstruct indigenous Indian concepts. Some of them have tried only at a conceptual level while others have moved to an empirical level. A number of examples of such efforts are present in this volume (J.B.P. Sinha, Singhal & Misra).

In this way we notice that Indian social psychology is now gradually developing an identity of its own. It has not received the attention of teachers who are still preoccupied with text books of Euro-American origin. In fact, to our knowledge no effort has been made by any Indian psychologist to write a textbook on social psychology from an Indian perspective. Here, we not only mean Indian empirical studies but also the Indian conceptual framework. We feel that Indian social psychology will be attending more to the institutional level dynamics and the way they operate at individual level rather than vice-versa. The behaviour and action of individuals as parts of collectivity will occupy greater space in social psychological deliberations.

Possibilities and Prospects

Need to expand data base: Whatever data and theory we have in the area of social psychology in India, they are from the samples of educated urban middle class population.

The structure and pattern which we get is largely a methodological artifact. They hardly refer to the rural people or marginalized people. The social class bias is clearly present in sample selection. People from the lower class are 'problems'. They cannot be genuine concerns in their own right. Their behaviour patterns, styles, attitudes and aspects of social life have not been documented properly. Their descriptions, if they are given, are in terms of abberations and not in terms of their intrinsic quality, characteristics and worth. This deprives us from a very rich source of knowledge. By expanding the conceptual network we shall be able to carve our own niche. Such an effort will not yield a uniform picture but shall certainly help to inform or contribute to social psychology.

Need to entertain multiple perspectives: It is being realized that social psychology does not constitute a single theoretical perspective. These perspectives are complementary rather than competitive. It would be theoretically relevant and fruitful for applications if we could approach the perspectives from an open mind. Overenthusiasm for any given perspective may obscure the generative potential of theories. Sensitivity to different perspectives may enhance the range of social psychological discourse.

Need for a Cultural Social Psychology: So far, social psychology has been acultural. It was treated as an independent force operating invariably across cultures. In actual practice it was inclusive for western cultures and exclusive for non-western cultures. This discrepant conduct of researchers was possible because of camouflaging and power differentials in the groups of researchers from different parts of the world. If culture was used, it was a source of problems. Its constitutive role, if properly recognized, can contribute to the conceptual repertoire of social psychology and can facilitate solution of local problems. In fact, culture and social psychology are mutually related and influence each other. This may enable new avenues for research which will allow culturally informed modes of appreciating social reality.

Need for a Critical Emancipatory Perspective: In recent years, there has been development of a critical perspective in psychology. It recognizes that the traditional practices and norms of the mainstream social psychology are often contrary to social justice and often prove detrimental for people and communities in general, and of oppressed groups in particular. Fox and Prilleltensky (1997) argue that by promoting individualistic ideal, it encourages individual pursuits and interferes with interaction and communication. It hinders efforts to bring people together to attend to and resolve community problems and allowing political and economic elite to make decisions for the rest of the people. The critical psychologists also feel that the negative consequences of societal values and norms do not fall equally on all sections of the society. More often than not oppression is positively related to inequality. They also feel that mainstream psychology's traditions reinforce oppressive institutions even when individual psychologists have no such goal in mind.

According to critical psychologists, the values to be pursued include social justice, self-determination and participation, caring and compassion, health and human diversity. These values have to be advanced in a balanced way. The configuration of these values

differs from one society to another and from time to time. Finally, some values have greater potential for transforming society than others.

Thus the critical psychological perspective allows scope for cultural variation in pursuing goals in research and teaching. In the Indian context major part of social psychological research has maintained a value neutral posture which maintains the status quo. The critical and empowering perspective has been missing in social psychological research. In order to develop a relevant and socially responsive social psychology the critical and emancipatory spirit has to be brought in.

Some Dilemmas in Practicing Social Psychology

The opening of the concerns of social psychology towards cultural context and effort to make them relevant is fraught with many dilemmas. Some of them are being briefly referred to as follows:

(1) **Interdisciplinarity vs. Loosing disciplinary identity:** The choice to make social psychology interdisciplinary simultaneously raises the threat of curtailing the academic freedom to maintain the identity of social psychology. The traditional division of labour had some (conventional) markers which in subtle ways decided to do's and don'ts for different disciplines. This led to vigorous effort for differentiation amongst them. Their adherents behaved like rival groups and did everything to preserve separate identities. This included separation of teaching departments, research problems, methods of investigation, journals and professional bodies. With all these creations the stance of separate identity has hardened in due course of time. This has created barriers in communication. The recent upsurge of interest in inter/multi/cross disciplinary perspectives is therefore often considered as confusing. The threats are ill founded. Contrary to it there is enough evidence that other kinds of social psychological ventures are received well in society, in case of other disciplines and media. Unfortunately interdisciplinarity collaboration and dialogue is minimal in the current academic milieu. The tendency to compartmentalize and capitalize knowledge has to be avoided if we really mean business in social science disciplines.

(2) **Indigenization vs. relevance:** In recent years there has been call for indigenizing psychology in general and social psychology in particular. This movement draws heavily on reconstructing the discipline through using symbolic resources and practices available in specific cultures. However, there is no one mode of undertaking this venture and it is operating at different levels. Also, its outcomes are yet not assimilated by the main body of social psychology. Apart from these reasons there is also a fear of becoming irrelevant and incongruent with the contemporary mode of social psychology. The question of relevance is also posed in the context of applications of indigenous psychology. Many psychologists think that being more concerned with tradition and culture the application of indigenous psychology becomes questionable. At present the situation is really ambiguous because indigenous psychology is yet to develop. We feel that an indigenous psychology

in true sense does not involve any tension over the issue of relevance. We would like to suggest that in order to be made relevant, social psychology must be indigenous. Being indigenous means becoming situated or located in the context. The fear, therefore, is unwarranted.

(3) **Disciplinary advancement vs. Significance for the society:** The pursuit of social psychology has proliferated mainly as an academic enterprise dedicated to theoretical advancement in the field. This was being achieved through designing and conducting more and more sophisticated studies with newer variables and increasing degree of control over relevant variables. In this way scientific work progressed as a filtering mechanism. While undertaking a scientific study the question of application does not occur. It is the job of subsequent research or reflection to see whether the study has any potential for application. This minimizes the significance of the study for society. As noted earlier the question of application is so ignored that social psychologists had to develop a new specialization called 'applied social psychology'. The applied work or action research unfortunately does not receive the attention in academic circles it deserves. A country like India which has limited resources can hardly afford the luxury of doing pure research. The only way out is that there should be a blend of academic and social concerns in the research process.

(4) **Theory driven research vs. Data driven research:** The orientation of psychologists has generally been more in favour of theory driven research. Thus a given theory makes a prediction and researchers try do demonstrate the empirical viability of such predictions. Researchers often examine the combination(s) of variables as predictors of dependent variables under study. In contrast, data driven research which begins with observation of a phenomena is infrequent and rare. The grounded theoretic approach has not been very popular. In practice, the dichotomy of theory and data is false because none of them operates in isolation.

Concluding Comments

The social psychological research in India has been predominantly concerned with describing reality with the help of available (western) conceptual categories having little concern with their cultural roots. In recent years rethinking has started and sensitivity to cultural context has increased. There are many examples of this welcome change which have not only expanded the range of variables but has enriched our discourse by enabling insiders view of Indian society. Attempts are being made to examine the boundaries of concepts and the way they behave in different cultural contexts. It is hoped that by utilizing untapped cultural resources, symbolic as well as behavioural (used in practices) social psychology may find the solutions of Indian problems from an Indian perspective. The hallmark of this perspective would be the interdependence of individual and society, rather than a dichotomy or dissociation of these two aspects of social life.

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